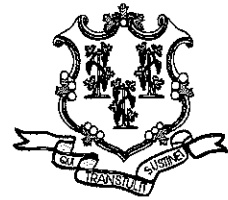




**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Public Hearing Testimony
Select Committee on Children
March 6, 2012**



S.B. No. 272 AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL SECURITY SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

The Department of Children and Families **supports the intent behind** S.B. No. 272 - An Act Concerning Social Security Support for Foster Children. This bill requires that the placement plan for each child in the care and custody of the Commissioner of Children and Families include documentation as to whether the child is eligible for benefits from the Social Security Administration, including, but not limited to, supplemental security income, survivor and disabled adult child benefits. It requires DCF to complete and submit an application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for any eligible child in its care and custody.

The Department appreciates the need to ensure that our children are enrolled for SSI and other programs for which they may be eligible in a timely manner. DCF received SSI benefits on behalf of 283 children for calendar year 2011 totaling \$1,120,107. Last year, 142 SSI applications were filed with Social Security and 54 SSI applications were disapproved. We have no objection to the requirement that we make application for SSI benefits, but we do not believe that we should be mandated by law to appeal any denial of an application.

The Committee may consider incorporating this concept into the permanency plan provisions of S.B. No. 293. In addition, we offer the following suggested amendment to the language of this bill:

- On line 1 - **Delete** "placement" and **insert** "permanency" in lieu thereof
- On lines 9 through 10 - **Delete** " appeal the denial of an application, if applicable, and"

S.B. No. 293 AN ACT CONCERNING PERMANENCY AND TRANSITION PLANS

The Department of Children and Families **supports the intent behind** S.B. No. 293 - An Act Concerning Permanency and Transition Plans. This bill requires that permanency plan documents submitted by DCF and any permanency plan hearings include information regarding what steps the department has taken to make any necessary referrals for children under five years of age to early intervention, preschool, or special education services, steps taken to enable a child sixteen years of age or older to learn independent living skills and complete a secondary education or vocation program, and steps taken to develop a personalized transition plan for children between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.

We recognize the importance of documenting specialized services for both the youngest and oldest populations that we serve. We agree that the permanency plan is an appropriate vehicle to capture this information.

S.B. No. 294 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Department of Children and Families **supports** S.B. No. 294 - An Act Concerning Children and the Department of Children and Families. This bill requires DCF to visit foster homes and the homes of children or youth every sixty days and also requires the department to respond to foster families' written special requests in a timely manner.

We believe that a sixty day visitation standard called for sections 1 and 2 of the bill, as an absolute minimum, is reasonable and we strive for much more frequent visitation with all children in our care. Visitation standards for both out-of-home cases and in-home cases are a requirement of the *Juan F.* Exit Plan. Outcome Measure 16 requires DCF to visit at least 85% of all out-of-home children at least once a month, except for probate, interstate or voluntary cases. For the most recent evaluation period (4th Quarter 2011), the Department met this measure 98.6% of the time. Outcome Measure 17 requires the Department to visit at least 85% of all in-home family cases at least twice a month, except for probate, interstate or voluntary cases. This measure was met 85.9% of the time during the most recent evaluation period (4th Quarter 2011). The Department fully appreciates the benefits of increased visitation by our staff and is committed to making this a priority for our case-carrying, front-line staff.

Section 3 of the bill requires DCF to respond in a timely manner to foster families' written special requests for things such as travel overnight or out-of-state with such child's foster family. We support this provision, but would suggest that, rather than requiring the Department to promulgate regulations, the bill be amended to require the requests be in writing on a form developed by the Department and that the Department shall respond within five business days or otherwise the request is deemed approved.

S.B. No. 296 AN ACT PROVIDING CERTAIN ADULT ADOPTED PERSONS WITH ACCESS TO PARENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION AND INFORMATION IN THEIR ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE

The Department of Children and Families **offers the following comments** regarding S.B. No. 296 - An Act Providing Certain Adult Adopted Persons with Access to Parental Health Information and Information in Their Original Birth Certificates.

The Department fully understands the need for adult adoptees to seek and obtain their original birth certificates, **but DCF has concerns with making this legislation effective retroactively as**

there are many birth parents who voluntarily relinquished parental rights with an expectation of anonymity.

Adoption law originated in 1944 in the State of Connecticut. From 1944 until 1975, adult adoptees (age 18 and older) and/or their adoptive parents in the State of Connecticut had access to their original birth certificates through the State Department of Health or the registrar of vital statistics at the town level. In 1975, the original birth records were sealed both from that point forward and retroactively.

<p><i>H.B. No. 5346 AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR AND TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO STATUTES AFFECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH</i></p>

The Department of Children and Families **supports** H.B. No. 5346 - An Act Concerning Minor and Technical Revisions to Statutes Affecting Children and Youth.

As the title of this bill suggests, this bill simply makes minor and technical revisions to statutes affecting children and youth.

